



The Central Cherry Creek Wildflower Preserve was created after the City of Austin removed a subdivision prone to flooding. In addition, it will also have a community garden.





Shoal Creek floods its banks in 1981.

- Between 1997 and 2006, the amount of impervious surface cover in Austin and its extra territorial jurisdiction rose from 11 percent to 14 percent of total land area.
- Impervious surfaces are very restricted in the Drinking Water Protection Zone. Development in the Barton Springs portion of the Drinking Water Protection Zone is limited to 15-25 percent surface coverage and impervious surfaces are limited to 20 percent in the Water Supply Rural watershed. However, there are a few remaining significant tracts that are “grandfathered” from these requirements. In addition, regulations differ in Austin’s Urban and Suburban watershed zone areas (i.e., impervious surface coverage is regulated by zoning districts in the urban watersheds zone and ranges from 45 percent to 90 percent in the suburban watersheds).
- Climate scientists predict that the Central Texas region could become warmer and drier.

Air Quality

- Central Texas is in compliance with all federal air quality standards. However, the region is in danger of exceeding ground-level ozone due to stricter federal standards. Air quality programs in Austin have primarily focused on the reduction of ozone levels.
- Ground-level ozone is Central Texas’ primary air quality concern. Poor air quality affects our most vulnerable residents, including children and the elderly, by irritating the respiratory system, reducing lung function, and aggravating asthma.

- Vehicle engines, electric generation units, industrial facilities, and many everyday activities create man-made sources of nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, which form ozone when exposed to sunlight. In 2007, most (55 percent) nitrogen oxides result from mobile sources, like cars, trucks, construction equipment, and lawn mowers. Most (78 percent) volatile organic compounds resulted from fixed area sources, such as industry, home heating, or forest fires. Central Texas is currently in compliance with federal air quality standards for ozone, though these standards may be revised in 2013.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- In 2010, the entire community within Travis County (including residents, businesses, and the governments) were responsible for emissions equivalent to 14.9 million tons of carbon dioxide (the standard measure for greenhouse gas emissions). Just more than half of these emissions resulted from energy use; another third were the result of transportation; the rest resulted from waste and wastewater treatment. Per person, this was lower than the average Texan (equivalent to 15 tons of carbon dioxide for Travis County, versus 25 tons for Texans overall) and the average U.S. citizen (19 tons).
- In 2007, the City of Austin passed the Austin Climate Protection Plan resolution. Since then, Austin has reduced electricity output by the equivalent of 26,100 homes per year, committed to powering all City municipal operations and buildings with 100 percent Greenchoice power, organized and begun implementing Climate Action plans and teams across all City departments, and continued to focus on collaboration, education, mitigation, and innovation.
- Potential impacts of climate change in Central Texas include increased drought and severe weather events, elevated temperatures, more heat waves, and worsening air pollution.
- Regional cooperation is needed to more completely implement climate change solutions.

Open Space, Green Infrastructure, and Agriculture

- While much of the planning area is urbanized, some of Central Texas' most fertile soils are located throughout the Blackland Prairie and Colorado River Terrace regions.
- In 2011, within Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction, 33 small- and medium-size farms selling in the Austin region cultivated over 87 acres of land.
- Local farming enhances sustainability by increasing our local food supply, addressing the challenge of food deserts in certain areas of the city, and contributing to the local economy. Despite these benefits, the amount of farmland in Travis County decreased by 12 percent from 2002-2007, a loss that is likely attributable to both urbanization and farmland being taken out of production.

- Austin's urban forest—its tree canopy—is vital to water and air quality and helps mitigate the urban heat island effect. In 2006, Austin's tree canopy cover was estimated at 30 percent of the city's total land area. Areas with the highest coverage were found in the western part of the city near Barton Creek and Lake Austin.
- The City of Austin is engaged in several programs to preserve sensitive lands and in 1998 began purchasing land for water quality protection. Austin Water Utility manages about 47,000 acres through the Wildland Conservation Division's Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Program and Water Quality Protection Lands Programs. Management of the wildlands toward a thriving ecosystem contributes to good water quality and quantity in our creeks, streams, and underlying aquifers.

Beautiful tree canopy in the Cherrywood neighborhood.



What Does It Mean?

Environmental Resources

- Water supply and quality will be two of the most critical issues facing Austin as it adds population.
- The City of Austin controls a large portion of the land within area watersheds, which gives it some control over development within these sensitive areas.
- The increased likelihood of future drought and strong storms adds to the vulnerability of the region's arid climate and reliance on rainwater to recharge the aquifer and to refill the Highland Lakes reservoirs. Higher temperatures may result in an increase in energy use to cool homes and businesses, resulting in more air pollution. Health risks and their related costs could also be associated with these potential impacts.

Data sources: City of Austin Community Inventory, USDA Census of Agriculture.



The University of Texas at Austin Brackenridge Field Laboratory is an 82-acre natural habitat and research lab uniquely located near Austin's urban core. The lab property includes a range of Central Texas landscapes and habitats, providing a home to many different species of plants and animals, while serving as an important research facility for study of ecology, evolution, and environmental change.



Austinites enjoy a sunny spring day on the hike-and-bike trail along Lady Bird Lake.

CITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

We have invested in high-quality facilities and services throughout the city; however new development and a changing population are placing pressure on service delivery.

Key Facts/Trends

Public Safety and Emergency Services

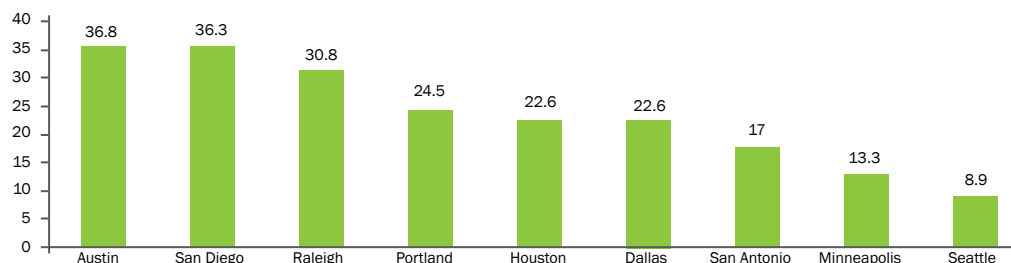
- The Austin Police Department has more than 1,669 sworn officers, 618 civilian positions, and had a Fiscal Year 2010 operating budget of \$250 million. The City's full purpose jurisdiction is divided into four regions and further subdivided into nine sectors.
- The department's community-based approach to law enforcement puts the responsibility for local policing in the hands of region commanders, with centralized functions providing support for operations and investigations.
- The average response time to high-priority calls in 2010 was just under seven minutes.
- In 2010, Austin had one of the lowest violent crime rates of all U.S. cities with populations exceeding 500,000.
- The Austin Fire Department has over 1,000 firefighter and 67 civilian positions operating from 44 fire stations throughout the city and at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.
- The Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services serves the entire county and is jointly funded by the City of Austin and Travis County. It operates under a "third service" public safety model, separate from police and fire.
- Thirty paramedic stations with almost 400 state-licensed paramedics are located throughout Austin and Travis County.

Parks and Preserves

- Austin has more than 35,000 acres of water recreation areas, parks and preserves and exceeds national guidelines for acres of parkland per person.
- Austin's park area has doubled in size over the past two decades, but funding and maintenance has not kept pace with growth. The Parks and Recreation Department's operations and maintenance budget is \$20 per capita, which is lower than the national average of \$91 per capita.
- Austin has more than 115 miles of trails, including 74 miles of hike-and-bike trails.
- An additional 26 parks and preserves are managed by Travis County.

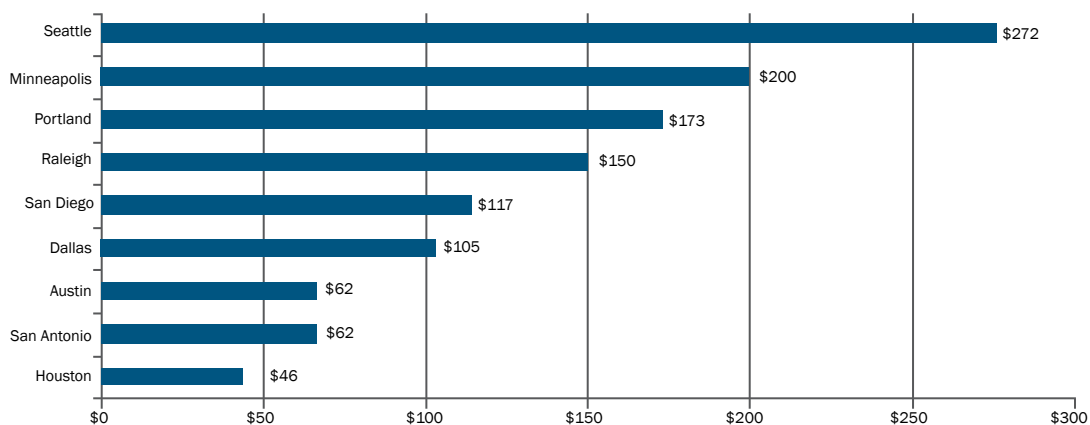
PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES IN AUSTIN (2011)			
Type of Facility	Number	Type of Facility	Number
District park	13	Hike and bike trails	74+ miles
Neighborhood park	74	Greenway	29
Pocket park	19	Golf course	6
School park	22	Tennis center	4
Metropolitan park	12	Tennis courts	108
Nature preserve	13	Special park	28
Swimming pools	47	Athletic fields	172
Recreation centers	20	Playscapes	90
Senior activity centers	3	Nature and science center	1
Garden center	1	Art centers	2
Rental facilities	2	Amphitheaters	6
Museums	5	Beach-front facilities	2
		TOTAL FACILITIES	685

PARK ACREAGE PER 1,000 RESIDENTS, FY2010



Source: The Trust for Public Land

PARK AND RECREATION SPENDING PER CAPITA, FY 2009



Source: The Trust for Public Land, includes both operational and capital costs.



The recently constructed Twin Oaks Library in the Bouldin neighborhood incorporates many sustainable design elements including water collection, water harvesting, and solar power.

- The Balcones Canyonland Preserve is a 30,428-acre system of endangered species habitat owned and managed by Travis County, the City of Austin, The Nature Conservancy, the Lower Colorado River Authority, and the Travis Audubon Society.
- There is a need for more infill parkland within walking distance of homes in many established neighborhoods, particularly in far south, north-central, northeast, and southeast Austin, and for a variety of parkland types, including neighborhood parks and wildlife habitat in the southwestern, northern, northeastern, and northwestern parts of the city and extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Library System

- The Austin Public Library System has 20 branch libraries, the John Henry Faulk Central Library, and the Austin History Center. In 2006, voters approved bonds for a new 250,000 square foot central library that is scheduled to open in 2014.
- More than 3.6 million visitors used the library system in Fiscal Year 2009-2010, including more than 700,000 computer login users.
- The library system has more than 1.3 million books, audiobooks, LPs, DVDs, CDs, e-books, and graphic novels. In Fiscal Year 2010, the Library Department checked out more than four million items.

Potable Water and Drainage

- The Austin Water Utility directly provides treated water to approximately 850,000 people, with wholesale water sales to another 45,000, for a total service population of approximately 895,000.
- Austin Water owns and operates two water treatment plants, which draw from Lake Austin with a combined treatment capacity of 285 million gallons per day; 46 pump stations; 38 treated water storage reservoirs; 3,651 miles of water main lines; and 25,300 public fire hydrants.
- A new water treatment plant and transmission main project is under construction. This plant will draw its supply from Lake Travis.
- Austin's 2011 five-year average water use is 163 gallons per capita per day. City Council has set a goal of 140 gallons per capita per day or less by 2020 through water conservation.
- The City's top water conservation priorities, in order of 10-year estimated savings, include: water restrictions (6.16 million gallons per day), reclaimed water use (5.95 million gallons per day), utility water rates structuring (5.0 million gallons per day), and reducing water losses (4.8 million gallons per day).
- The Watershed Protection Department is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the municipal stormwater conveyance system for the City, which includes both natural (creeks, lakes, Colorado River) and manmade components (more than 900 miles of storm drain pipes).

Wastewater

- The Austin Water Utility manages approximately 195,000 wastewater service connections, which in 2008 represented service to about 830,000 people.
- Austin Water owns and operates two central wastewater treatment plants: the South Austin Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Walnut Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. These two plants have a combined treatment capacity of 150 million gallons per day.
- In a typical year, three percent of the wastewater received at the City of Austin's wastewater treatment plants is treated and reused for non-potable uses. During 2009, Austin Water Utility reclaimed and used almost 2 billion gallons of treated wastewater from its two central wastewater treatment plants and three smaller satellite treatment plants.
- The Austin Clean Water Program was completed in April 2009 and reduced sewer overflows from 13 million gallons in 2002 to less than 301,800 gallons in 2008, and removed 20 miles of sewer lines from creek beds.



Solid Waste

- Austin Resource Recovery is responsible for city-wide litter abatement and collection of discarded materials from approximately 164,000 residential customers, 235,000 anti-litter customers, and 2,600 commercial customers. Most multi-family residences, business, and institutions must contract with private haulers to collect and process discarded materials.
- Austin's residential and workforce populations discard about 1.4 million to 1.5 million tons of materials per year. These discarded materials are either disposed of at landfills (about one million tons) or are diverted from the landfills for reuse or recycling. Austin Resource Recovery's customers contribute approximately 25% of these materials each year.
- The City of Austin closed its landfill and is now part of a regional system of four municipal solid waste landfills, two construction and demolition debris landfills, and fifteen transfer and citizen collection stations.
- Austin offers curbside recycling every two weeks to its customers. Nearly 70 percent of Austin residents living in single-family dwellings participate in curbside recycling.
- The primary sources of recyclable and organic resources are curbside recycling (46 percent), collection of yard trimmings and brush (38 percent), and private users of the Austin's materials recovery facility (17 percent). Compostable organics comprise over half of the total material discarded. It is estimated that the value of the materials currently sent to the landfill and lost to the local economy is more than \$40 million annually.



A transformer station in Northeast Austin.

Energy

- Austin Energy serves 388,000 customers and a population of more than 900,000, including several communities outside of Austin's city limits. Austin Energy's 200 largest commercial and industrial customers provide about 34 percent of all revenues. Austin Energy also serves four municipal street and highway programs (powering street and traffic lights, for example) as well as more than 1,500 governments and agencies (including the City of Austin, State of Texas, Travis County, and the Lower Colorado River Authority).

ELECTRICITY CUSTOMERS BY CLASS

Customer Class	Number of Customers	Consumption (kWh)
Residential	345,197	3,908,318,000
Commercial	41,825	4,350,912,000
Industrial	75	1,930,289,000
Street/highway	4	47,230,000
Other government	1,519	1,088,320,000

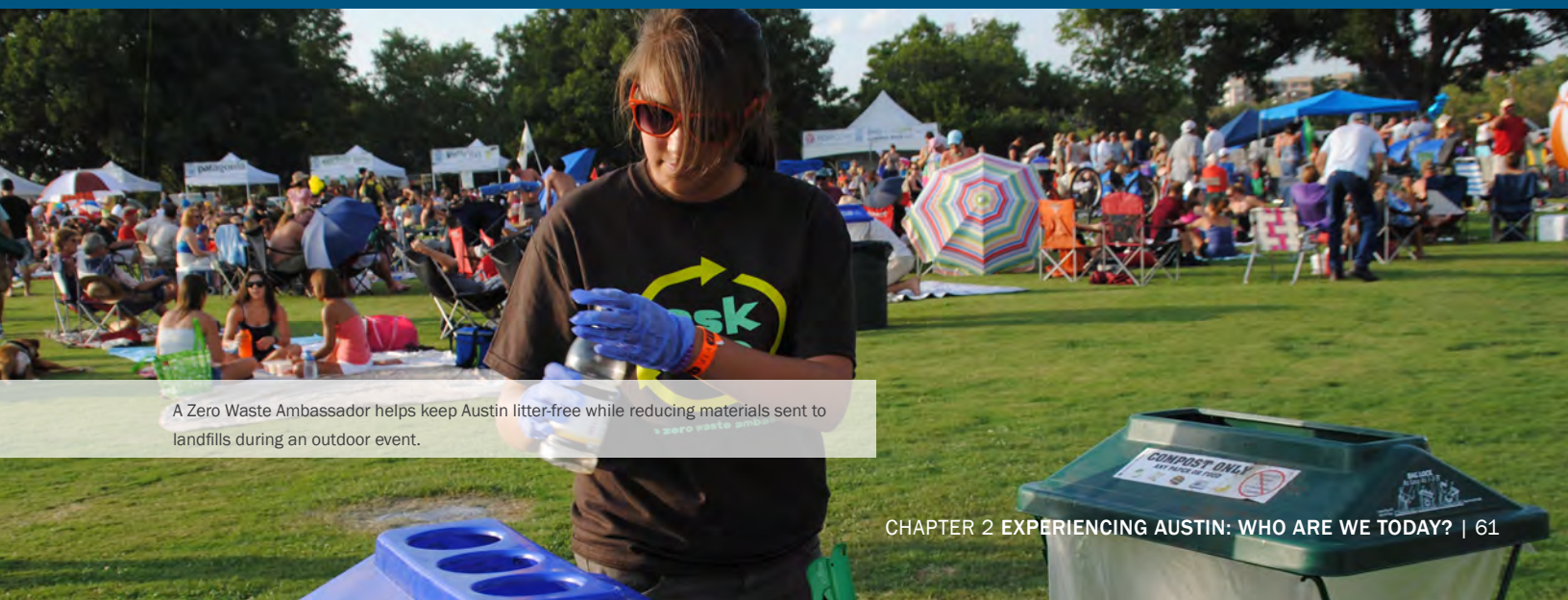
- As of September 2008, Austin Energy had approximately 2,760 megawatts of generation capacity, including facilities owned or co-owned and power purchased under contract. Purchased power resources include an additional 300 MW of summer-only power purchases through summer 2010. Austin Energy receives base load generation from the South Texas Project (nuclear) and the Fayette Power Project (coal). Austin Energy owns two natural gas-fired generation facilities, the Decker Creek Power Station and the Sand Hill Energy Center, both located in Austin.
- Austin Energy has contracts for the annual energy produced by 439 MW of wind turbines located in West Texas. The utility also receives 12 MW of output from two landfill methane gas projects, one located near Austin and the other in San Antonio.
- From 1982 through 2003, Austin Energy's conservation, efficiency, and load-shifting programs reduced peak demand by 600 MW. Since 2004, the utility has been working on a goal to reduce peak demand by an additional 700 MW by 2020.
- Austin Energy's 2020 energy resources plan calls for maintaining its current generation resources and its current conservation and load-shifting goal of 700 MW by 2020. To meet the remaining gap of approximately 238 MW of its projected load, the utility plans to add 300 MW of natural gas generation by expanding the Sand Hill Energy Center (100 MW of that total is currently under construction) and 912 MW of renewable.
- Austin Energy maintains more than 5,000 miles of overhead primary and secondary power lines, 4,000 miles of underground primary and secondary lines, and 48 substations.

What Does It Mean?

City Facilities and Services

- Continued low-density suburban development can strain the City's public safety budget, as more development on the city's fringes will require additional police and fire stations to ensure adequate response times.
- The per unit costs associated with serving low-density, sprawling development with water and wastewater services are generally greater than those associated with denser, more compact development.
- Creek flooding poses a recurring risk to public safety and property. Localized flooding threatens property across the city due to undersized, deteriorated, clogged, or inadequate storm drain systems.
- The city has an above-average amount of parkland, but funding for maintenance and upgrades has not kept up.
- More attention needs to be paid to creating smaller parks that are in or within walking distance of neighborhoods. The absence of these smaller parks means that many areas of the city are not adequately served by the park system.
- Austin's existing parks and trail system are amenities that should be considered in planning for infill in and redevelopment of urban core areas.
- As the city becomes more compact, there is a greater need to incorporate more urban play spaces for children in parks and other public places.
- Austin is a regional leader in conservation strategies, but it must be proactive in planning for supplying water and other municipal services to its rapidly-growing population.
- More residents and businesses need to be encouraged to recycle to reduce the amount of solid waste sent to landfills.

Data source: City of Austin
Community Inventory.



A Zero Waste Ambassador helps keep Austin litter-free while reducing materials sent to landfills during an outdoor event.

SOCIETY AND HEALTH

Rising housing and transportation costs, school quality, and access to healthcare, food, and social services are major considerations for families and residents living in Austin.

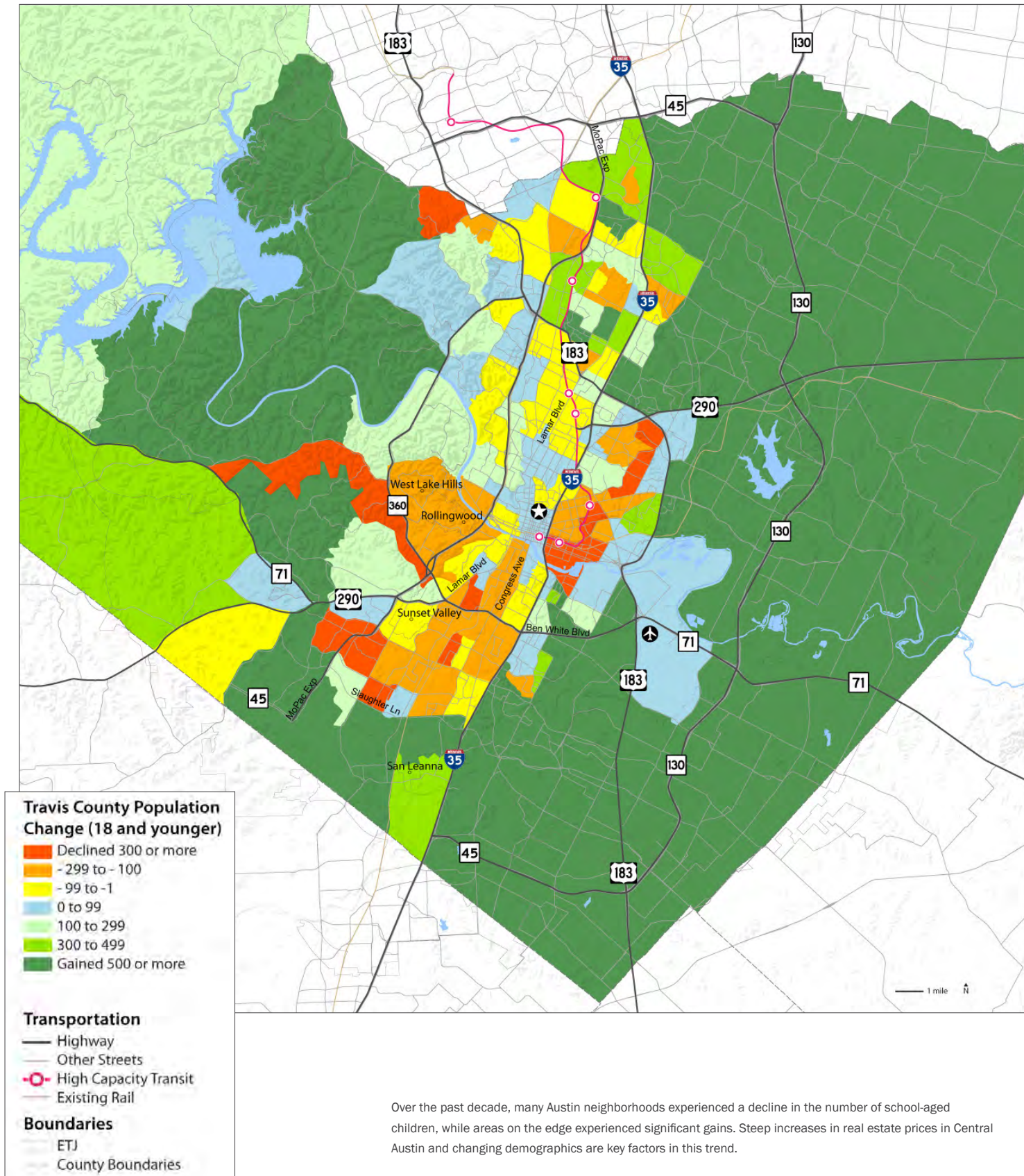
Families and Households

- Families make up a slim majority of Austin households (52 percent), compared with 62 percent in the Austin-Round Rock metropolitan area and 67 percent in the nation.
- The number of households with children declined substantially from 1970 to 1990. Since 1990, the proportion of households with children has held steady (slightly declining from 30.2 percent in 1990 to 29.5 percent in 2009).
- Households with children make up a smaller part of the population in the urban core, compared with the edge of the city and the extraterritorial jurisdiction. A number of factors contribute to this disparity: higher housing costs, fewer quality public schools, walking and biking safety, and access to key amenities such as parks and childcare. See Figure 2.7 for change in households with children from 2000 to 2010.
- Austin's non-Hispanic White population is composed of fewer households with children (20 percent), compared with African American (36 percent), Asian American (35 percent), and Hispanic (45 percent) households. However, the total number of White and Hispanic households with children is about the same.

Education

- Eleven school districts educate Austin-area students, with more than 170 schools within the planning area. Students also attend about 30 charter or alternative schools and more than 30 private schools.
- With more than 80,000 students, the Austin Independent School District is the largest educational provider for students grades K-12.
- All of the school districts in the Austin area have increased their enrollment since 2000.
- In 2009, 71 public schools in the Austin area were rated exemplary. However, four schools located in Austin's east side were rated academically unacceptable.

Figure 2.7 Change in Population Younger than Age 18 (Travis County 2000-2010)



- Two area school districts, Austin and Manor, struggle with the number of students who dropout at some point during high school, with overall 4-year dropout rates slightly greater than the state average. This is particularly an issue among African American and Hispanic students:

4-YEAR DROPOUT RATE - CLASS OF 2010				
	African American	Hispanic	White	Overall (All Students)
State	11.8%	9.6%	3.5%	7.3%
Austin ISD	12.6%	11.9%	3.5%	9.0%
Manor ISD	16.7%	13.5%	11.1%	13.9%

- The high rate of teenage pregnancies in Austin and Travis County contributes to the significant dropout rate of many area high schools.
- A further challenge for many students from low-income families is the need to change schools when they change residences. A 2010 study by the Austin Independent School District, Travis County, and City of Austin found high rates of student mobility at several schools in the east and northeast part of the school district.
- Colleges and universities are essential to Austin's identity. The city is home to the University of Texas (one of the largest universities in the nation), St. Edward's University, Huston-Tillotson University, Concordia University, and Austin Community College. There are about 100,000 college or university students in Austin.
- In line with other community colleges in Texas, 15 percent of full-time Austin Community College students go on to earn a undergraduate degree after six years.
- In 2010, more than 4,800 educational programs were hosted by the Library Department. This includes free computer classes held at three public libraries.

Austin Community College's South Austin Campus (ACC) is one of eight area ACC campuses. The college serves 45,000 credit students, including some 4,000 enrolled at the South Austin Campus. ACC helps students meet a variety of goals, including workforce training for high-demand careers, university transfer, college readiness, and attainment of new skills for career advancement. Image courtesy of ACC.



School Districts	SERVICE AREA		ENROLLMENT	
	Total (Sq Mi)	In the planning area (Sq Mi)	Total	At schools within the planning area
Austin	229.8	226.2	81,763	81,686
Bastrop	427.6	3.9	8,538	0
Del Valle	171.2	138.4	9,234	8618
Dripping Springs	199	3.8	4,023	0
Eanes	33.3	28.4	7,325	3342
Hays Consolidated	225.5	20.3	13,047	0
Lago Vista	35	3	1,239	0
Lake Travis	117.6	23.2	5,871	695
Leander	198.3	51.6	26,551	4,909
Manor	89.2	57.7	5,828	2,371
Pflugerville	76.6	21.9	20,807	7,901
Round Rock	98.2	41.4	40,448	14,870

Health and Healthcare

- From 1999 to 2008, the total mortality rate in Travis County was 774 deaths per 100,000 people. African Americans experienced a significantly higher mortality rate (1,002 deaths per 100,000 people), while Hispanics experienced a lower rate (692 deaths per 100,000 people). Though these mortality rates are adjusted for the overall age of the population, the City epidemiologist believes that a generally older African American population and generally younger Hispanic population continues to contribute to these differences.
- Diabetes, heart disease, and chronic lower respiratory disease result in about 29 percent of deaths in Travis County. These diseases also reduce Austinites' quality of life. Eight percent of Travis County residents suffer from diabetes, 5 percent from cardiovascular disease, and 7 percent from asthma.
- Hispanics and African Americans experienced higher rates of obesity and diabetes than the general population. Whites and African Americans experienced higher rates of cardiovascular disease and asthma (with African Americans experiencing twice the overall asthma rate).
- In 2010, 17 percent of Travis County residents who needed to see a doctor could not, at some point, because of cost. This rate was higher among Hispanics (24 percent) and African Americans (23 percent). Similarly, while 89 percent of White residents had access to some kind of health care coverage, only 75 percent of African American residents and 61 percent of Hispanic residents did. Less than 20 percent of Austin physicians accept new Medicaid or Medicare patients.



Dell Children's Hospital in the Mueller neighborhood.

- While Texas continues to have a high rate of teenage pregnancy compared with other states, the incidence of teen pregnancy in Travis County has generally declined since the mid-1990s. Teen pregnancy has a disproportionate effect on communities of color: the birth rate for Hispanic teens is almost ten times higher than that of White non-Hispanic teens; the rate for African American teens is two times greater.
- The Austin region is served by three major hospital systems: Seton Family of Hospitals (based in Austin), St. David's Health Care (based in Austin), and the Scott and White network (northern Central Texas region).
- The Travis County Healthcare District created in 2004, doing business as Central Health, provides publicly funded healthcare services to the county's low-income residents through its Medical Access Program, a health plan with a network of healthcare providers. Benefits are available to families at or below poverty level through a limited provider network. Central Health also pays for discounted care through selected providers for individuals earning up to 200% of poverty level.
- The University Medical Center at Brackenridge also provides hospital-based services when necessary.
- Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas is the only dedicated freestanding pediatric facility in the region.
- The Integrated Care Collaborative, a nonprofit alliance of healthcare providers in Central Texas, works to improve the healthcare delivery to the poor and people without health insurance and operates and manages the region's electronic health information exchange, the ICare system.

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE OF AUSTIN RESIDENTS, 2009		
Group	Insured	Uninsured
Children under 18	84.7%	15.3%
Working-age adults	71.4%	28.6%
Adults 65 and older	96.8%	3.2%
Individuals with a disability	82.3%	17.7%

Public Health and Social Services

- The Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department provides public health, social, and environmental health services for Austin and Travis County and serves nearly one million residents. Working in partnership with the community, Health and Human Services creates and provides services that improve quality of life, lower morbidity and mortality rates, address social inequities, and prevent both contagious and chronic diseases. The department operates six neighborhood centers that provide social services for low- and moderate-income families. Services include child care programs, homeless assistance, day labor and employment programs, mental health/substance abuse services, programs for at-risk youth, services to seniors and persons with disabilities, and basic needs services.
- In addition, it provides the following services: vital records, emergency preparedness and response, regulatory and environmental health, immunizations, women's and children's health, sexually transmitted disease services, disease surveillance, and chronic disease prevention services.
- The Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Services Department work to prevent homeless, domestic abuse, and communicable diseases.
- The City of Austin's budget for fiscal year 2011-2012 allocated \$14.1 million dollars for social services funding.
- Austin's Animal Services manages the largest animal shelter in Central Texas, caring for more than 23,000 animals each year. In 2011, the City moved its animal shelter to a new facility on Levander Loop and achieved "no-kill" city status.
- Austin is home to many not-for-profit organizations, but has a history of low rates of charitable giving.



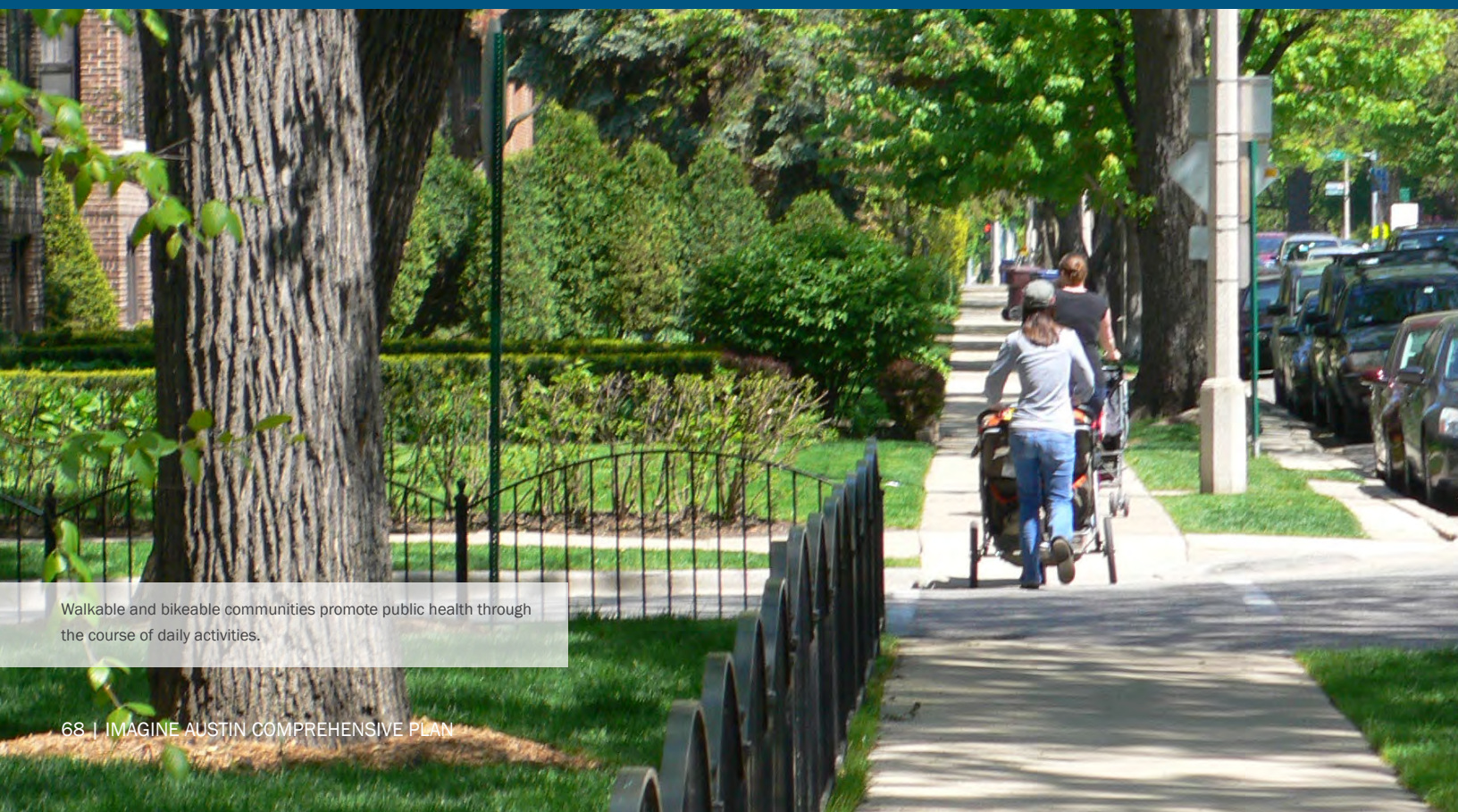
El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Mission is a nonprofit and outreach ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas that helps lower income Austin Latino families through affordable health care, education, and human services. Photograph courtesy of El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Mission.

What Does It Mean?

Society and Health

- Families with children are not necessarily staying in Austin. Rising housing costs, school quality, safety, available amenities, and educational costs are concerns for families.
- The two school districts serving the largest area in the extraterritorial jurisdiction (Austin ISD and Del Valle ISD) are facing challenges related to population growth, immigration/language needs, poverty, transient families, and sharply reduced funding from the State of Texas.
- Higher educational institutions are a major part of Austin's identity, history, and economy.
- Austin has a very active social service network. The Community Action Network is developing a set of priority indicators for children and youth to measure progress.
- Teenage pregnancies can have profound effects on the mother's future prospects, her family, child, and the broader community. Teen parents are more likely to drop out of school, not attend college, experience unemployment, and earn lower wages. Children of teenage mothers are more at risk for having low birth weight, prematurity, and infant mortality.
- Design of the physical environment affects public health. Ensuring that new development creates walkable and bikable communities with safe pedestrian facilities and recreation opportunities can promote the health and well-being of Austin's residents and reduce risk factors associated with diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.

Data sources: City of Austin Community Inventory, Create Austin TXP, Inc.'s Economic Impact 2005 Study of Austin, and the Urban Institute's Cultural Vitality in Communities Study.



Walkable and bikeable communities promote public health through the course of daily activities.

ARTS AND CULTURE

We are a leader in creative and artistic fields, but rising costs of living and working in Austin may affect the long-term viability of the arts community.

Key Facts/Trends

Arts/Cultural Events

- Austin is nationally renowned for its arts scene and has earned the nickname “The Live Music Capital of the World.” The city is home to more than 100 live music venues, multiple music festivals, 1,543 music-related businesses, and over 1,900 music acts.
- Austin has historically drawn large numbers of creative individuals, fueling a strong experimental drive for a city of Austin’s size. It has a growing film industry, a thriving gaming and digital media industry, a new works theater community, and serves as an incubator for emerging artists and entrepreneurs. Yet there is a concern by mid-career and mature artists that there are not adequate services, facilities, or commerce to support them in their artistic endeavors; many move elsewhere as a result.
- There are more than 35 museums in the Austin Museum Partnership (a consortium of museums) which includes arts, sciences, history, nature preserves, music, and government museums. The city’s numerous museums and galleries include the Mexic-Arte and the Jack S. Blanton Museum. However, Austin does not yet have the iconic museums of other cities of the same size.



“Philosophers Rock,” a statue by sculptor Glenna Goodacre at Barton Springs Pool depicts three renowned Austin writers—Frank Dobie, Roy Bedichek, and Walter Prescott Webb—who used to meet at Barton Springs for what was known as “Austin’s first literary salon.” The statue was a project of Capital Area Statues, Inc. (CAST), a non-profit dedicated to recognizing Texas history and culture through public sculpture.

- The City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department serves more than 650,000 visitors a year with arts, culture, and nature programs at its facilities, including the Elisabet Ney Museum and the Zilker Botanical Garden.
- In 2006, Austin ranked second among major U.S. cities in terms of the number of non-profit community celebrations, festivals, fairs, and parades per 1,000 persons.
- Austin has been commissioning award-winning public art projects through the Art in Public Places program since 1985; however, many of the projects are not well-known to residents and visitors.
- Theater and dance are significant contributors to Austin's creative economy (over \$330 million in 2005). The city has more than 32 theater venues, with many more theater companies and playwrights.

Economic Impact and Funding

- The creative sector (including music, film and visual media, not-for-profit performing arts, visual arts, and arts-related tourism) contributed 48,000 permanent jobs, more than \$71 million in tax revenue, and more than \$4.35 billion in annual economic activity in 2010.
- Austin's music festivals are important to the city's economy. The 2011 South by Southwest contributed \$167 million to the local economy; the 2011 Austin City Limits Festival contributed \$73 million.
- The city's film, television, sports, and animation industries generate approximately \$113 million in 2010 and provided over 3,500 jobs. The city's gaming industry generated more than \$900 million in 2010, providing more than 7,200 jobs.
- In 2006, residents approved a \$31.5 million bond measure to support construction and renovation of seven of the City-owned arts and performance facilities. Yet there continues to be a perceived lack of affordable, accessible, and/or appropriately equipped arts spaces.
- Over the last few years, the City of Austin's Hotel Occupancy Tax portion for non-profit arts and culture groups and sponsored artists projects enabled the City to allocate approximately \$5 million annually to 240 non-profit arts groups.

Arts Education Programs

- The Austin Independent School District, other school districts, and private schools operate arts education programs as an integral part of student learning and development. Nevertheless, students in all areas of the city do not have equal access to arts programming.
- In 2011- 2012, the Austin Independent School District, the City of Austin, MINDPOP (representing arts and cultural organizations), and the Kennedy Center’s “Any Given Child” program partnered to inventory arts education in K-8th grade in the school district, determine gaps, and create a strategic plan.
- In 2010, City of Parks and Recreation Department’s History, Art and Nature Division facilities provided 1,841 adult and children classes.
- While arts, film, and music education is strong in area universities and colleges, technology education is somewhat limited.



Austin Children’s Museum, Austin Kiddie Limits exhibit (retired February 2009), 2004. Photography by Jim Lincoln.

What Does It Mean?

Arts and Creativity

- Austin's live music and arts scene is a cornerstone of the city's identity.
- Creative industries are an important element of the city's economy and can be leveraged for additional economic growth.
- The arts and creative community struggles with issues of funding, affordable and appropriately-sized performance and practice space, housing, health and healthcare, and quality of life issues.
- City and private funding for local arts facilities and programs is critical to the ongoing strength of the arts in Austin.
- Lower-income communities may not have adequate opportunities to participate in Austin's arts programs and events.
- Workforce development programs need to provide job training for technological, arts-related occupations.

Data sources: City of Austin Community Inventory, CreateAustin Cultural Master Plan.



Roy Lozano's Ballet Folklórico de Texas, La Culebra from Jalisco, dancer Jessica Rodriguez, August 25, 2007, at Zilker Hillside Theatre. Photography by Ruben Loera.

DEVELOPING A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Austin has long been the hub of the Central Texas region. Our Central Business District is the “Downtown of Central Texas.” Although Austin is the principal place where jobs and necessary goods, services, entertainment, and amenities are concentrated, the city’s role as the only regional center has changed as increased suburban development has pulled against this identity, reducing the city’s share of employment, services, and housing.

This does not mean that we are losing our central position in the region. As the employment, educational, medical, and retail hub of Central Texas, we attract thousands of commuters, patients, shoppers, and visitors each day. Other communities may be gaining new retail, offices, and housing, but Austin’s unique assets—our educational institutions, government facilities, hospitals and emerging medical districts, the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, downtown, independent businesses, arts and entertainment offerings, and natural amenities—ensure that we will remain the regional leader for the foreseeable future. In many regards, the success and growth of the surrounding suburban communities is directly tied to Austin’s past and continued regional role as the arts, entertainment, and economic center.

At an even larger scale, Austin is part of the dynamic, fast-growing Dallas/Fort Worth-San Antonio-Houston Texas Triangle “mega-region” (see Figure 2.9). We are responsible for working with our neighboring governments, and larger cities like Dallas and San Antonio, to understand the complexity of regional issues, develop coordinated strategies, and ensure that as a region we have the capacity to move forward.

CENTRAL TEXAS REGION IN 2011

Regional Issues

Being a regional leader means more than having the most people or assets; we must understand that our actions affect nearby communities. By and large, Austin’s problems are the region’s. Because we are closely connected to our neighbors, our solutions must be mutually beneficial. There are several key issues facing the region that must be tackled in a collaborative manner across municipal boundaries.

Conversion of agricultural land and fragmented development

Much of the land on Austin’s periphery and in its extraterritorial jurisdiction is agricultural or undeveloped. Development has been happening in these areas as parcels are converted to subdivisions and commercial and office centers, particularly along or near major roadways. The U.S. Census of Agriculture reports that between 2002 to 2007, nine percent of the region’s agricultural land was taken out of production, with the highest rate of loss occurring in Hays and Travis counties. This coincides with an increase in land values throughout the Austin area and a decline in the profitability of small farms. Fragmented, low-density development outside the region’s municipalities is more costly to serve with infrastructure and services, requires residents to depend exclusively on the automobile to travel, and encroaches on and consumes the region’s open spaces.

Limited water supply and water systems

Some new development is occurring in outlying areas that have limited or no water systems to support moderate or concentrated growth. Many area communities do not have resources to extend existing infrastructure or do not have contracts for long-term water supply. Some of those that do have contracts already exceeding their yearly allocations. Limited availability of public water infrastructure reinforces scattered, sprawling development and new draws on groundwater sources will affect the region's water supply, particularly in times of extended drought.

Housing-jobs imbalance

Half the working-age populations of all the counties in the region, except Travis, commute to another county for work. Most of this travel moves toward Austin, but increasingly this travel is also between the communities surrounding Austin. Even Austin has seen its share of residents commuting out of the city grow, rising more than nine percent between 2002 and 2009. This work-related travel points to a regional mismatch between the location of residences and jobs. Some of this may be attributable to lifestyle preferences, such as personal preferences for small towns or rural living, but it is also the result of rising housing costs throughout the region. Prospective homeowners must “drive until they qualify” to find affordable housing that meets their needs, and many of these affordable units are found in distant subdivisions with limited transportation options.

Rising costs of housing and transportation

Land values and housing costs are increasing throughout the region. Some of this increase is due to funding delays for new infrastructure (i.e., new residential developments have been approved, but construction must wait until adequate infrastructure can be built to serve them; in the interim, costs rise for existing units because fewer new units are being built). Prices for infill units (new housing built in already developed areas) are increasing for different reasons, most of which relate to limited supply and growing land values in more developed areas and the complexity and regulatory difficulty associated with this type of development. Many Central Texans must live in locations they can afford, no matter how inconvenient this location is to work, shopping, or services. Affordable housing choices for single people or married couples without children, other than single-family houses and sprawling garden-styled apartments, is even more limited.

Transportation costs have been rising steadily over the past decade due to increased gas prices. This has created financial burdens for many households that moved to Austin's periphery to secure affordable housing, but now find themselves farther away from jobs and needed services and able only to travel by car. In a 2010 report, the Capital Area Council of Governments found that more than half of the region's households spent at least 45 percent of their incomes on housing and transportation costs.¹

¹ This figure represents the Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos MSA, which includes Burnet County in addition to Travis, Williamson, Hays, Caldwell, and Bastrop counties.

Few regional transportation options

As the region's population struggles with rising costs, the shortcomings of the regional transportation system become even more pronounced. The regional transportation network is built for

cars, and the growing congestion we see is the direct result of increasingly distant growth with few transportation options. Too many people live and work in places where densities are too low to support regular transit service or are outside of a transit agency's service area. In many places served by transit, the routes and the frequency of service are so limited that people do not view it as a viable alternative to driving.

Regional job growth mostly in lower-wage positions

The Central Texas economy has continued to grow through the current national recession, although growth has slowed in high-tech, higher-skilled sectors. Much of the region's recent job creation has been directly related to its rapid population growth over the past few decades. As Central Texas has welcomed new residents from all parts of the country and the world, demand has increased for service-oriented jobs, such as leisure and hospitality services and business and professional services. These jobs typically require fewer skills, pay lower wages than professional and high-tech jobs, and offer fewer benefits. Households faced with lower-paying jobs and increasing housing and transportation costs are experiencing greater economic stresses. In a 2009 report, the Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project estimated that approximately 40 percent of the region's families live "at the edge of their means" due to the widening gap between household incomes and household expenses.²

Different legal powers to regulate development

Central Texas contains two types of governments with land use authority: counties and municipalities. The State of Texas allows municipalities to regulate development comprehensively within their corporate boundaries. They can also regulate some development within their extraterritorial jurisdictions to ensure that it meets minimum standards, works in conjunction with infrastructure investments, and minimizes impacts on natural resources. Counties have fewer controls over development, mostly due to the assumption that their jurisdictions will not contain large areas of urbanized land; however, this is increasingly not the case in the counties surrounding larger urban centers. Today, Texas counties have only the ability to regulate subdivisions, on-site sewage systems, floodplain development, and water supply. A few, such as Travis County, have the power to require stormwater management, impose fire codes, and develop standards for water wells to prevent groundwater contamination. Unlike cities, counties do not have the authority to enact building codes, a zoning ordinance, or impact fees. As a large percentage of the region's growth is occurring outside municipal boundaries, the limited power of the counties provides little control over the location, quality, and impacts of development. This has resulted in low-density, piecemeal development throughout the region and makes it difficult for jurisdictions to work together to implement regional growth management strategies.

Finding and implementing solutions to these issues only can be achieved if we adopt a regional perspective. This perspective should be "Austin with our partners." We are the leader of Central Texas and through *Imagine Austin* and other regional projects, we will work with our neighbors to improve the future of the region.

² The "region" referenced here includes Travis, Williamson, Hays, Caldwell, Bastrop, and Burnet counties.